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DRAFT REPORT OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS ON MULTIMODAL TRANSPORT

which met at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 9 to 13 March 1992

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Chapter III

DRAFT FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME IN THE FIELDS OF MULTIMODAL TRANSPORT, CONTAINERIZATION AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

(Agenda item 5)

1. For its consideration of this item, the Group of Experts had before it the following documents:

- "Suggestions for elements of a new programme of work for the Committee on Shipping in the fields of multimodal transport, containerization and technological development" - note by the UNCTAD secretariat (TD/B/C.4/AC.11/7); and

- "Inventory of existing mandates and new draft programme of work in the fields of multimodal transport and technological development" - report by the UNCTAD secretariat (TD/B/C.4/323).

2. The Group of Experts carried out its work mindful of the "winds of change" generated at the eighth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development held shortly before in Cartagena. UNCTAD VIII had been held against a background of political and economic changes which were transforming the world order in a profound way and which had provided member States and participants with an unprecedented opportunity to lay the foundation for policies of co-operation aimed at promoting economic and social progress in all countries of the world.

3. In order to confront this challenge, UNCTAD VIII had decided to establish a new partnership for development which commited all member States to engage in a continuous and constructive dialogue inspired by the need to achieve a more efficient and equitable world economy.

4. The Group of Experts recognized the impact this new partnership would have on the development of multimodal transport, containerization and technological development, given the wide range of operational, institutional and commercial issues involved in multimodal transport.

5. The Group noted that amongst many issues discussed at Cartagena, member States had recognized the important contribution of the private sector in the development of competitive service industries. In particular, private corporations often facilitated job creation, human resource development, technology transfer, infrastructure development and expansion of export capacity and capabilities - all elements in the multimodal transport environment.

6. It was further noted by the Group that UNCTAD member States at Cartagena had agreed that developing countries should pursue policies to create the appropriate conditions for the development of their national service sectors and, in particular, producer services. Such policies, could include, *inter alia*, the following elements:

(a) Modernisation and expansion of necessary infrastructure, in particular of telecommunication and information services;

(b) Human resource development, including on- the-job training arrangements, and development of knowledge-intensive services;

(c) Measures to encourage investment and cross-border trade by firms in the services sector in order to contribute to objectives such as the transfer of technology, training, the strengthening of infrastructures, domestic capital formation, and access to information networks and distribution channels, as well as to make use of services from competitive domestic suppliers in developing countries; and

(d) The progressive liberalisation of the services sector and the formulation of strategies to improve domestic service capabilities and for internationally competitive services.

7. The Group considered these elements to be fundamental to the successful development of multimodal transport services in the continuing quest for trading efficiency. Further, these elements encouraged the fostering of entrepreneurial initiatives focused on improving efficiency, competitiveness and the contribution of the public and private sectors. The Group noted that governmental actions might from time to time be necessary to complement the operation of markets inefficiencies.

8. The Group was mindful of the role of good management in the trading and transport sectors and of the fact that good management had several dimensions in that it encompassed governmental action to establish appropriate frameworks and rules of the game for the effective and proper functioning of markets and a healthy climate for economic activity. Good management also entailed the provision of the necessary physical and social infrastructure, the concern for the environment, the pursuit of sound macro-economic policies, the creation of a conducive policy environment, and the development of the human resources required to support economic activity and policies that respected efficiency in the use and allocation of resources. Further, good management required clear legal frameworks, rule setting and decision-making, as well as transparent processes for the sound management of resources. All of these "good management practices" were prerequisites for the effective development and use of multimodal transport.

9. Finally, the Group recognized that attainment of trade efficiency in the future would rely heavily on the use of information technology in the areas of trade facilitation and Customs automation.

10. The Group noted that multimodal transport and containerization included many complex issues, requiring detailed analysis, examination and reflection, and it recalled that the Committee on Shipping had felt unable to deal with these issues because of their very technical nature.

11. Without a reallocation of resources within the UNCTAD secretariat, the Shipping Division would not be able to undertake much more than it already managed. Consequently, it would be necessary to rely not only on co-operation with the regional commissions, but also on regional or subregional institutions, as well as the international organizations, to supply part of the technical assistance required. The greatly expanded level of requests for assistance in the fields under consideration made this a matter of some concern.

Action by the Group of Experts

12. With these complex and profound issues in mind, the Group of Experts formulated a draft programme of work in the fields of multimodal transport, containerization and technological development. Taking into account the decision of UNCTAD VIII to suspend existing committees, including the Committee on Shipping, the Group agreed to submit the draft programme of work to the Secretary-General of UNCTAD for subsequent submision to the standing committee on services with a view to its consideration and adoption (for the text of the draft programme of work, see annex I).

Chapter IV

OTHER BUSINESS

(Agenda item 6)

13. On the question of dissemination of information on multimodal transport, containerization, and technological development, the Group found the secretariat's publication of the Multimodal Transport Newsletter very useful. Because of the rapidly evolving circumstances and specific nature of the subjects covered in the newsletter, the Group felt that a semi-annual publication of the Multimodal Transport Newsletter would be desirable. The Group suggested that the newsletter be included in the annual printing programme of UNCTAD, and it appealed to trade and transport specialists in multimodal transport, containerization and technological development to make contributions to the newsletter.

14. The Group also suggested that an informal network of organizations engaged in or representing the multimodal transport system, be established in all countries to allow the dessimination and collection of information on these issues.